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and the long slanting beams of the sun, which recalled to my recollection the following lines :

"The broad sun verging on the close of day,
A fuller red beams o'er th' etherial plain,
The streaky clouds attend his last bright ray,
And silver Vesper leads his starry train."

The Picts are said to have made *ale* from heath, or heather; what a rare article for taxation we have lost, by the stupidity of our ancestors! Entering the commons of Carrickfergus, I came in sight of Loughmorn, literally Lough-mor, *i. e.* the great lough, being about a mile and a quarter long, and at a mean about half a mile broad, and is said to be the largest sheet of water of the same altitude in Ireland, being 566 feet above the level of Carrickfergus bay. The gloom of evening was now spreading fast over the landscape, so I did not halt to make any observation, but hastened home, where I soon arrived, both tired and pleased with my journey.

Carrickfergus.

S. MS.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE REFORMATION OF CRIMINALS.

ON reading an account in the public papers of so many acquittals at Carrickfergus assizes, most of which took place, for want of prosecution; I was led to regret the present state of our laws, with respect to the punishment of offenders, and perfectly agree in the sentiment, that if the mode of punishment was changed, prosecutions would be more certain, and the offender, instead of being turned loose to molest again the peace of society, would meet with punishment proportionate to the offence he has committed, and might

by a course of proper treatment be restored to usefulness.

According to the present mode of punishment, death is in many cases the certain consequence of prosecutions, and many people feel a reluctance in coming forward to prosecute in a transaction, where the least idea is entertained that the proceedings may terminate in the death of the unhappy culprit. Thus, offenders often escape, and are as it were encouraged to proceed in their old habits, if not to greater lengths than ever.

The country swarms with shop-lifters and pick-pockets, and it requires some effectual means to endeavour to lessen the number. The mode hitherto used, has not had the desired effect. Neither transportation nor punishment by death seems to diminish the number of crimes. It is I believe generally agreed that death is too severe a punishment for petty offences, and many entertain the opinion that the life should not be taken on any account, even for crimes the most enormous, with which latter sentiment I fully unite. And in my view of the subject the mode of transportation appears to me to carry with it many serious objections. The dispositions of those transported are not likely to be much improved by the measure. The country to be sure is well rid of the nuisance, but I do think that in the carrying on of prosecutions against delinquents some view should be had to something better than merely to get rid of the annoyance, without adopting some measure that might in some degree tend to their future amendment; and how far the present system of our Jails, or mode of transportation is adapted to that end, we are all pretty sensible.

I expect that very few instances could be produced of individuals

being reclaimed to a proper line of conduct by transportation or confinement in our Jails, the measures appear to me to have had a contrary tendency. Great reformation is necessary with respect to the mode of punishing offenders. To reclaim, should in my opinion be the great end in view, for though they may be guilty of many crimes requiring the strong interference of law, they are still our fellow creatures and demand our pity and serious attention to be paid to their wretched situation. I would by no means be for a lax line of punishment, or that offenders should escape without due chastisement. The necessity of many cases requires in some measure severity, but I would have it tempered with a view, if possible, to their future improvement.

The institution at Philadelphia (I can hardly call it a prison) appears to be well worthy of imitation. It seems calculated to answer every purpose for which it was intended.

Humanity and a view to usefulness are so interwoven with the mode of punishment, and the manner of treatment so carried on as cannot fail to produce the most beneficial effects: effects beneficial to society, and highly useful to individuals, who have been the subjects of confinement have arisen from this wise establishment; an establishment which instead of being a burthen to the state, is amply supported by its own industry.

Who among us that contemplates with serious reflection on the state of such things here, would not wish that something of the kind was set on foot in this country, and that some of the vast sums of money voted away every year for worse than useless purposes were applied to erecting establishments similar to that at Philadelphia. Much good would no doubt result therefrom, and

instead of those who have forfeited their liberty by a violation of the laws growing worse by punishment and acquiring stronger habits of vice, there would be a probability of their being made better, and restored to a due sense of their errors. But according to our present system of transportation and confinement in our Jails, not the smallest hope of their amendment remains. Instead of coming out of confinement, or returning from transportation (if they should return) bettered by their past situation, they are worse, and acquire fresh degrees of strength to pursue with redoubled vigour, the path of vice, and commit fresh depredations on society.

I believe it is no uncommon thing in America for persons who have been confined in the Philadelphia prison for heinous offences, after undergoing the necessary restraint under proper regulations and the mode adopted there, to come out with confirmed habits of industry and impressed with a due sense of moral rectitude.

Instead of their minds being hardened, or remembering their former situation with disgust, it is contemplated by them with sentiments of esteem and gratitude to the managers of the institution; they become useful members of the community without their former conduct being remembered to them in terms of reproach, but receive all the respect due to a reformation of manners. And I suppose very few instances occur of offenders returning to their old habits, or requiring a second course of punishment.

Surely, these are subjects which merit the serious consideration of those in whose hands the power lies to bring about a reform in matters, that so nearly concerns the good of all; but it is much to be regretted, that statesmen are too much employ-

ed in facilitating schemes of a contrary tendency.

The war system seems to occupy nearly the whole attention of those in power and devising means for its support, to accomplish which the public good is sacrificed, and the consideration how to remove abuses too much lies dormant.

Great reformation is much wanting in almost every department of public and private measures. But amidst the gloom that a view of the present state of things presents, a ray of hope sometimes enlightens the prospect, in observing the exertions of a few individuals in public life, in endeavouring after a change of system in more departments than one, that might tend to the general good. But alas! these are overborne by the corruption that so generally prevails, and the self-interested motives of too many at the head of public affairs. But whether the endeavours of the few steady advocates in the cause of reform avail or not, they will have, at least, the satisfaction of remembering that they have done all they could.

Nearly connected with the foregoing observations, is the consideration of the benefit of right education among the lower classes, and it must be a source of real pleasure to every friend of the human race, to observe that the education of the children of the poor is become so much the subject of public attention. It is a subject that loudly calls for the support of all who are interested in the improvement of their fellow-creatures, to forward the benevolent exertions of those individuals who have undertaken the arduous but delightful task of "teaching ignorance to see." Incalculable benefits may arise from their exertions and through their means the foundation laid in early life of strict morality and sound principle, and an impression of the

necessity of rectitude of conduct in every department of human life.

Much is called for at the hands of those whose situations in the world enable them to contribute their support to these institutions wherever scattered in the bounds where they reside, and also to the establishing of them where they are not. If the sums of money that are daily squandered in superfluities and extravagance, were appropriated to this purpose, how different would the appearance of things be among us. Thousands who are now wallowing in ignorance and sloth, would have the means of being instructed and becoming, instead of subjects for a Jail by the commission of crimes, useful members of the community, and patterns of these virtues that add a lustre to the dignity of human nature.

Before I close these observations I would just remark the regret I have sometimes felt in looking over the accounts of plans for public buildings, and could not help observing that if simplicity was sufficiently attended to in the design and execution, the sums allotted for such purposes would be much less, thereby reserving a portion that might be applied to the establishing of other useful buildings equally wanting.

In a late newspaper I observed resolutions for building a new Church in the town of Newry, with a design of applotting a sum not less than £12,000 towards defraying the expences. I could not help remarking in my own mind, that if real usefulness be the object in view, how much less a sum than this would answer the purpose, and the money intended to be laid out in superfluous ornaments be applied to the necessities of some useful, charitable institution.

What use for lofty spires? It may be said they are ornamental. They may be ornamental, but they are cer-

tainly not useful, and the money employed in erecting such ornaments had better be applied to some better purpose. Simplicity is certainly more consistent with the idea of the purpose for which such buildings are intended.

N. S.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON AFFORDING TO KEEP A CONSCIENCE.

IT is related of the late Dr. Paley, that he jocularly said of himself, that "he was not rich enough to afford to keep a conscience." Whether the jocularity was real or affected, the saying appears to afford a key to the doctor's character. About the period of his using these expressions, much discussion had taken place among many clergymen of the church of England, on the subject of subscription to the 39 articles; and some highly respected characters, as Lindsey, Disney, &c. had resigned their livings rather than comply, when the dictates of their judgment did not sanction the external act of compliance. The doctor's thorough orthodoxy was rather suspected, but as a salvo to his own mind, he invented the convenient doctrine, that each might put his own construction on the articles, which were only to be considered as "articles of peace." This convenient doctrine soon became fashionable: many, as well as the doctor, satisfied themselves with a reservation as to internal belief, and by giving an external assent, retained their emoluments, and put a stop to the desertions, which were then rapidly for a season thinning the ranks of the church. The casuistry of "*not affording to keep a conscience*," soon became fashionable and was found very efficacious in silencing scruples.

From the present temper of the times, and the current of public opinion, the disinclination to keep a conscience is very prevalent, and is a characteristic feature of modern manners. The inflexible firmness of good old times is out of fashion, and if knowledge have increased, unbending, undeviating integrity has declined. In the polish of manners, asperities have not only been rubbed off, but a considerable part of the substance has been lost, and a great portion of steady principle has been sacrificed to smoothness and pliancy.

We require to be recalled to an adherence to principle, and to prefer the higher toned virtues of former times, to the modish defect of not possessing a discriminating character. Pope's satire, partial when exclusively confined to one sex, may be extended to both sexes, and to most ranks in life, and we may admit that many "have no character at all;" the many have so little of mind, and preserve so little of that independence, which best indicates the exercise of judgment, and the individuality that results from the employment of mind, that to go into company, and hear the conversation on the topics of the day, there is so little of discrimination, and originality of matter or manner, we might be induced to say, they are composed of

"Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguish'd by black, brown,
or fair."

Man is a gregarious animal, and to dwell in herds is his favourite inclination. Consequently each circle has to a certain degree its own maxims, and is governed by its own laws. So far all is well, and according to the nature and constitution of the mind of man, but as excess leads into error, and many